



# **Permanent Structured Cooperation and the Future of ESDP: Transformation and Integration**

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## 1. INTRODUCTION

The efficiency problem of Europe's armed forces is well known: of an impressive overall number of over two million men and women in uniform in the EU-27, only a meagre 10 to 15% are estimated to be deployable. The causes are manifold: the low cost-effectiveness of a plethora of small-scale capabilities, unnecessary intra-EU duplications, the presence of large numbers of quasi non-deployable conscripts, capability gaps in terms of 'enablers' (in particular strategic transport, command, control and communications), and, although all EU Member States are conscious of the challenge and are implementing measures, slow transformation nonetheless from territorial defence to expeditionary warfare. The question must be asked whether the existing mechanisms for capability development, in ESDP as well as NATO, are sufficient to achieve the required transformation within a reasonable timeframe.

This article will argue (1) that the primary cause of this problematic state of affairs is the still almost exclusively national focus of defence planning, while capability gaps at the aggregate EU- and NATO-level are being ignored, and (2) that the only way to achieve the quantum leap that is necessary to realise defence transformation is through pooling which, by reducing intra-European duplications, can produce much more deployable capabilities within the current combined defence budget. From that point of view, it will analyse the potential of the Common Security and Defence Policy (CSDP) to be established by the Lisbon Treaty, and in particular of *Permanent Structured Cooperation*,<sup>1</sup> the new mechanism for capability development for 'those Member States whose military capabilities fulfil higher criteria and which have made more binding commitments to one another in this area with a view to the most demanding missions' (Art. 28A §6). One could argue that the solutions to Europe's capability conundrum are in effect well known. The question is whether *PermStrucCoop* – or an analogous mechanism in case the fall-out of the Irish referendum proves deadly for the Lisbon Treaty – can be the platform that convinces the Member States to implement them.

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<sup>1</sup> Even in a text as full of jargon as the Treaty on European Union, *Permanent Structured Cooperation* stands out as especially awkward, all the more so as its logical acronym, PSC, already exists, referring to the Political and Security Committee. Even though the latter is widely known as COPS, in order to avoid confusion this article will opt for Soviet-style abbreviation, hence *PermStrucCoop*.

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## 2. *PERMSTRUCOOP* IN THE LISBON TREATY

The text of the Treaty certainly is ambitious, which underlines the political significance of *PermStrucCoop* as a statement of conviction vis-à-vis ESDP. The preamble to the Protocol attached to the Treaty that outlines the objectives of *PermStrucCoop* and the criteria for participation speaks of “a more assertive Union role in security and defence matters” and even of “embarking on a new stage in the development of the European security and defence policy”. The Protocol’s Article 1 translates this into two objectives, one general, i.e. to proceed “more intensively” with capability development, and one specific, i.e. to supply (part of) a battle group by 2010.

Article 2 then states how these objectives are to be achieved, or in other words what the Member States willing to take part in *PermStrucCoop* should commit to:

- To agree on objectives for the level of investment in defence equipment;
- To “bring their defence apparatus into line with each other as far as possible”, by harmonizing military needs, pooling, and, “where appropriate”, specialization;
- To enhance their forces’ availability, interoperability, flexibility and deployability, notably by setting “common objectives regarding the commitment of forces”;
- To address the shortfalls identified by the Capability Development Mechanism (CDM), including through multinational approaches;
- To take part, “where appropriate”, in equipment programmes in the context of the European Defence Agency (EDA).

The final Article 3 states that the EDA “shall contribute to” a regular assessment of participating Member States’ contributions.

From the general nature of the wording of the Protocol and the absence of any figures it is evident that the crucial decisions have yet to be made: how to operationalize the commitments of Article 2 and translate them into concrete criteria for participation?

One thing is clear though: *PermStrucCoop* must be inclusive, allowing as many Member States as possible to participate. This was the consensus that emerged from the political debate following initial proposals in the European Convention in 2002 for a “defence Euro-zone”, which had a much more exclusive flavour to them but provoked fears of too deep divisions within the EU.<sup>3</sup> Inclusiveness is the right choice, for the more Member States participate, the greater the potential for the creation of synergies and effects of scale and thus the more added value. The ideal *PermStrucCoop* is that at 27, to borrow a Belgian general’s *boutade*. An all too exclusive *avant-garde* of just a few like-minded Member States – if those could be found – could probably achieve deeper integration and would thus yield more immediate results, but those would equally probably be obscured by the negative political fall-out which it would generate, as it would be likely to widen the intra-EU divide between those more and those less in favour of ESDP. Alternatively, *PermStrucCoop* between France, Germany, the UK, Spain, Italy and Poland, as apparently proposed by certain French and, earlier, Spanish actors,<sup>4</sup> would not just ignore the potential of the other countries and the

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<sup>3</sup> European Convention, *Final Report of Working Group VIII – Defence* (CONV 461/02). Brussels, Convention Secretariat, 16 December 2002.

<sup>4</sup> Lucia Kubosova, “France to Push for Intervention Force Created by EU Big Six”. In: *EU Observer*, 15 February 2008.

proportionately large contributions to ESDP operations of many of them,<sup>5</sup> but, by pitting the “big six” against the smaller Member States, would be very divisive. Such an idea goes directly against the spirit of the European project.

The justifiable choice for inclusiveness carries with it a risk though. It must not lead to setting the bar for participation so low that it no longer entails any commitment to make additional efforts on behalf of the Member States. If one can participate by virtue of one’s existing capabilities, without having to undertake to increase the number of deployable forces, *PermStrucCoop* serves no purpose. The challenge therefore is to reconcile inclusiveness and commitment, to agree on objectives and criteria that allow all Member States to participate, each at its own level of means, but that do imply a substantial commitment to make available more usable capabilities.

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<sup>5</sup> See e.g. the group of eight countries that in the period 1995-2007 deployed an above average percentage of their forces in every year: Austria, Denmark, Finland, France, Ireland, the Netherlands, Norway and the UK. Bastian Giegerich and Alexander Nicoll (eds.), *European Military Capabilities – Building Armed Forces for Modern Operations*. London, IISS, 2008, p. 13.

### 3. OBJECTIVES AND CRITERIA: GIVING SUBSTANCE TO THE TREATY

In the debate on European defence efforts, certain figures are being repeated like a mantra, e.g. the idea that every State should spend 2% of GDP on defence. Such proposals, which are now also being mentioned in the context of fleshing out *PermStrucCoop*, seem to ignore the basic political and budgetary context in Europe. A closer look immediately makes clear that such general budgetary criteria are either evidently unfeasible or by themselves cannot be expected to yield substantial results in terms of accelerated transformation. Setting a defence budget of 2% GDP as threshold for participation will lead to *PermStrucCoop* between just France, the UK, Greece and Bulgaria.<sup>6</sup> For countries like Austria, Belgium and Germany, this amounts to almost a doubling of the defence budget – which will not happen. Alternatively, achieving a sound balance between personnel costs, operational costs and investments *within* the defence budget – like the often cited 50-25-25 division – is very laudable, but has been a goal of many Member States for a long time and has not proved to be easily achievable, nor has it directly generated additional capabilities. Limited defence budgets and the need for a socially acceptable solution to personnel issues mean that only a very slow evolution towards the “ideal” balance – if that *überhaupt* exists – is possible.

In the same vein, criteria applied to the whole of participating States’ armed forces appear to have limited potential for achieving concrete results within a reasonable timeframe. The objective of 40% deployability and 8% sustainability, i.e. 40% of the armed forces have to be deployable and one fifth of those or 8% of the total must be deployed at any one time, seems equally laudable but has been cited for years, notably with regard to land forces, without triggering substantial improvements. In fact in 2007 of all EU Member States only Ireland and the UK deployed 8% or more of their forces; the EU average stood only at about 3.7% and 18 Member States deployed less than 4% of their forces.<sup>7</sup> The means for a quantum leap in the whole of the armed forces at once are simply not available in any Member State.

For the same reason, it does not seem realistic to demand Member States to fulfil all criteria at the moment of entry into *PermStrucCoop*. The comparison with monetary union can illustrate this: if all convergence criteria would have had to be fulfilled at the moment of entry, many current long-standing members of the Eurozone would still not have been able to join the single currency.

Quantifiable and verifiable criteria are of course necessary for *PermStrucCoop* to work. But criteria must also be achievable by a majority of Member States, as *PermStrucCoop* must be inclusive, and must have the potential to accelerate transformation and produce tangible results, i.e. additional deployable capabilities, in the medium term. Therefore, although the more general criteria of the type described above can still be useful as long-term points of reference, in the more immediate future:

- *PermStrucCoop* must be aimed at specific and concrete capability objectives.
- Criteria must then apply to these specific capabilities for which Member States undertake commitments in the framework of *PermStrucCoop*, rather than to the total of their armed forces or defence budgets.
- These commitments must be results-oriented, to be realized by an agreed deadline.

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<sup>6</sup> Giegerich and Nicoll (eds.), *op.cit.*, p. 94.

<sup>7</sup> Giegerich and Nicoll (eds.), *op.cit.*, p. 15.

First and foremost therefore, the objectives must be defined: which precise qualitative objectives is *PermStrucCoop* to achieve? This must not be answered in terms of input – what is each Member State offering to contribute, i.e. without further ado replicating the bottom-up approach of the Headline Goal process, which would simply result in another catalogue of theoretically available, non-identified forces. The answer must be output-driven, i.e. which *tasks* do the Member States want to be able to do together, *how* do they want to be able to do these, and which sum total of capabilities is needed to that end? The EDA, which is given an important role in the Protocol, can provide this task-oriented basis on which each Member State can found the definition of its objectives in joining *PermStrucCoop*. Of course, these objectives will also be determined by which capabilities are already available, and by how many additional capabilities can realistically be expected. But in which areas the additional capabilities are to be created should be driven by the EDA-identified priorities on the basis of which tasks to be performed and how. Once these objectives are agreed, criteria and deadlines can be developed to be applied to these specific targets.

The end-result should be that in an agreed number of years and thus at a quicker pace than at present, in certain agreed fields, more deployable capabilities are available than today. This should enable the EU to implement its military tasks at a higher level than today in terms of scale and numbers of operations, and to do so more effectively and efficiently. The aim is not that *PermStrucCoop* as a whole would constitute one single – e.g. corps-sized – force package that can be deployed as such. It is a framework, a tool, for capability development, not for operations – but one may reasonably expect those who participate to show more willingness to participate in operations.

#### 4. CONTRIBUTING TO *PERMSTRUCCOOP*

In order to establish the output to which the objectives of *PermStrucCoop* must be geared one can first look at the Lisbon Treaty itself, which in Article 28B §1 extends, or perhaps better said, defines in more detail the Petersberg Tasks: basically all military operations, across the full spectrum – including ‘the most demanding missions’, as mentioned in the Protocol – except for collective territorial defence. Within that framework, the broadest guidance, at horizon 2025, is provided by the EDA’s *Long-Term Vision*, which for six broad capability domains – command, inform, engage, protect, deploy and sustain – prescribes the characteristics of future capabilities: synergy, agility, selectivity and sustainability.

Different options for participation then present themselves. These are not exclusive: each Member State can select one or more of these:

- Option 1: The most immediate capability objective is to close the remaining shortfalls in the various specific capability areas required to fulfil the Headline Goal (HG) 2010, as listed in the Progress Catalogue. The lowest threshold for a Member State to participate in *PermStrucCoop* would thus be the willingness to contribute to that aim in one or more of those specific capability areas.
- Option 2: More broadly, participating Member States could also undertake to increase the deployability of existing force packages (e.g. mechanized or light infantry brigades, helicopter units) that cut across a range of capability areas. Today there exist many formations, often large-scale, that are not deployable and hence do not constitute a capability. The aim need not necessarily be to create more *stand-by* forces – almost all Member States already fulfil the second objective of *PermStrucCoop*, i.e. taking part in a battle group, while the difficulty of the NATO Response Force (NRF) to achieve its desired strength of 21,000 shows that in the current state of European capabilities, too large stand-by forces that are exclusively tied to one organization and cannot be deployed in other frameworks limit rather than enhance Europe’s ability to do operations.
- Option 3: More broadly still and existing force structures and capabilities set aside, Member States could adopt a more prospective approach and start planning for future capabilities in new areas in which the EU is not yet active.

Of major importance in all three options is the guidance provide by the EDA, in order to ensure that commitments are anchored in the EU framework, i.e. are focused on the capability shortfalls at the aggregate EU-level that are relevant for the EU’s military tasks, rather than being based on national considerations only without reference to combined needs, as happens all too often still.<sup>8</sup> In this regard the new Capability Development Plan (CDP) elaborated by the EDA and endorsed by the Member States on 8 July 2008 is important. The four strands of the CDP are to provide the framework for planning at the national level, to function as a “plan for planning”: the Headline Goal 2010, i.e. existing capability objectives in the short to medium term; the technology trends, informing Member States which capabilities might be possible in the longer term; lessons learnt from operations in various frameworks (ESDP, NATO etc.); and a database of Member States’ current longer term plans and programmes, which notably allows the EDA to identify opportunities for cooperation. At the same time as

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<sup>8</sup> Many capability decisions are notably motivated by a desire to protect national industries or to preserve prestige, resulting in investments in areas where at the EU level there is no need or even a surplus, e.g. frigates.

endorsing the overall approach of the CDP, Member States also selected twelve topics for specific action,<sup>9</sup> which can usefully inform *PermStrucCoop*.

As Member States express their interests, the EDA will gain a picture of the capability areas in which initiatives will be taken. The resulting combination of initiatives, to be realized by an agreed deadline (which can vary in function of the capability field), would de facto constitute a successor Headline Goal to the soon to expire HG2010.

Criteria can then be developed that apply to each planned contribution, regardless of its size, allowing each Member State to contribute at its own level of means. Such specific criteria are much more achievable than general criteria applying to participating Member States' armed forces or defence budgets as a whole. Relevant criteria per contribution could include:

- Deployability and sustainability targets (which can vary in function of the capability field): if not the whole of Member States' armed forces, at least the new initiatives, geared to the identified shortfalls, should lead to effectively available capabilities.
- Interoperability: all new initiatives should be geared to combined, i.e. multinational, operations from the start.<sup>10</sup>
- A level of investment in defence equipment, as mentioned in the Protocol, but per capita (where applicable, e.g. with regard to a brigade).

In addition and also referring to the Protocol, one criterion of a more general nature could be useful, i.e. a minimal participation in EDA equipment programmes. Member States ought not to take part in every project, but a minimal financial contribution, based on GDP, could be fixed. Member States could retain the freedom to choose the programmes in which they participate, but once allocated, the money should be managed by the EDA.

Although *PermStrucCoop* as such is not an operational framework, participating Member States can be encouraged to contribute to operations, which is of course the ultimate aim. Wouters<sup>11</sup> details how a link can be made between force generation for specific operations and capability development by introducing extensive common funding for ESDP operations instead of "costs lie where they fall". Member States would contribute to common funding in function of GDP, but deploying capabilities for an operation would count as a contribution in kind, to be deducted from the normal contribution to common funding, according to fixed rates per man day, flying hour and sailing day, which can be modulated in function of mission-specific conditions, such as risk to troops and wear and tear of equipment. The condition would be that the capabilities contributed would answer to the Combined Joint Statement of Requirements for the operation (CJSOR), i.e. that they would fulfil an actual military need rather than an unsolicited type of contribution. Thus at the same time the impression of paying twice (once under "costs lie where they fall" and once under the existing

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<sup>9</sup> Counter man-portable air defence systems (MANPADs); computer network operations; mine counter-measures in littoral sea areas; military implications of the comprehensive approach; human intelligence; intelligence, surveillance, target acquisition and reconnaissance (ISTAR); medical support; CBRN defence; third party logistic support; counter-improvised explosive device (IED); helicopters; network-enabled capability (NEC).

<sup>10</sup> Member States have agreed to not develop interoperability standards in the ESDP framework, but to apply NATO STANAGS.

<sup>11</sup> Patrick Wouters, *Balancing Defence and Security Efforts with a Permanently Structured Scorecard*. Egmont Paper 23. Brussels, Egmont, 2008, [www.egmontinstitute.be/paperegm/ep23.pdf](http://www.egmontinstitute.be/paperegm/ep23.pdf).



Athena-mechanism) would be avoided and Member States would be encouraged to invest in the “right” capabilities. Perhaps in addition sustainability could also be a general criterion for participation in *PermStrucCoop*, but then a much more realistic target must be set than the usually mentioned 8%, e.g. between 4 and 5%.<sup>12</sup>

Setting criteria only makes sense if capabilities are pre-identified, for otherwise no effective evaluation by the EDA as foreseen in the Protocol is possible. *PermStrucCoop* can build on the experience of the battle groups, which introduced the notion of pre-identified units in ESDP. Setting criteria applying to the specific pre-identified contributions of each Member State will bring real added value as compared to the existing “catalogue system” of ESDP. This evaluation must be real indeed, for the Treaty foresees that participating Member States that no longer fulfil the criteria can be excluded. One further criterion for participation in *PermStrucCoop* could thus also simply be the obligation to inform and show full transparency towards the EDA.<sup>13</sup> In addition, on a voluntary basis, participating Member States could also agree to exercises and “tactical evaluation” of their capabilities, which would enhance the quality of the assessment and could lead to a process of certification. This task could be performed by the EUMS together with Member State representatives.

Even though these objectives and criteria do not cover the whole of Member States’ armed forces and defence budgets, they are achievable within the existing political and budgetary context, which is one of, at best, stable, but certainly not increasing defence budgets. In the medium to long term, through a process of rationalisation, cutting of redundant capabilities and prioritizing of usable capabilities, focussing on these objectives and criteria will affect the complete defence effort of the participating States.

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<sup>12</sup> Naturally all deployments count towards this target, not only those in the context of ESDP operations. The common funding mechanism could also be applied to NATO operations, as Wouters advocates.

<sup>13</sup> Bruno Angelet and Ioannis Vrailas, *European Defence in the Wake of the Lisbon Treaty*. Egmont Paper 21. Brussels, Egmont, 2008, p. 43, [www.egmontinstitute.be/paperegm/ep.21.pdf](http://www.egmontinstitute.be/paperegm/ep.21.pdf).

## 5. CONTRIBUTING THROUGH POOLING

Regardless of which option(s) Member States select to contribute to *PermStrucCoop*, they can choose to contribute on an entirely national basis, by improving and creating national capabilities, but they can also opt for cooperation and *pooling* of assets with other participating Member States in order to create multinational capabilities.

One of the main causes of the low deployability of Europe's armed forces is that national thinking still dominates defence planning: most Member States aim to maintain a wide range of *nationally* organized capabilities in army, navy and air force, and take little or no account of EU – or, for that matter, NATO – guidelines in their national decision-making process. But because in most Member States the scale of the armed forces and the size of the defence budget are limited, this leads to what Pilegaard has tellingly dubbed 'mini-mass armies':<sup>14</sup> Member States maintain the structures of their larger Cold War-time armed forces, but without the numbers below those structures to actually make up all the units. The overall result is one of fragmentation, duplication and very low cost-effectiveness. Only limited quantities of each capability can be maintained, but each small-scale deployable capability needs supporting services and many of the overhead costs are fixed: whether a Member State operates 1 or 100 tanks or fighters – in both cases a base is needed, personnel must be recruited and trained, supplies bought, and the paperwork done... If only 10 to 15% of Member States' armed forces are deployable, it is because with these small-scale capabilities they cannot man a full rotation cycle if full units (battalions, squadrons) are deployed and will thus be out of the loop for a longer time after every deployment, or alternatively they can only sustain sub-units in very limited numbers for longer periods. Too large a share of personnel is devoted to overhead and supporting services that are unnecessarily duplicated within the EU – the true duplication debate. The budgets that are absorbed by those unnecessary duplications cannot be spent on the ongoing transformation from territorial defence to expeditionary warfare, which requires investment in equipment, recruitment, and training and manoeuvres – needs that are reflected in the capability shortfalls.

Pooling of assets, which is included in the Protocol on *PermStrucCoop*, appears the only way to overcome this problem of fragmentation and should therefore be actively stimulated. *PermStrucCoop* could function as a forum – a marriage agency – identifying opportunities for cooperation between Member States once they have declared their intention to contribute in one or more areas, through one or more of the options described in the previous paragraph. Such cooperation can take different forms, from (i) joint procurement projects in order to equip national formations, to (ii) the creation of pooled multinational formations, and (iii) joint R&T projects. Maximum effect will be created by pooling, i.e. effective integration: an "end-to-end" process leading from joint procurement to common logistics, training, doctrine etc.<sup>15</sup> Obviously, pooling cannot be but voluntary. Furthermore, not all Member States participating in *PermStrucCoop* must cooperate in all fields: if Member States A, B, C and D find they share an interest in capability area X and establish a form of cooperation (i), at the

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<sup>14</sup> Jess Pilegaard, 'The European Security and Defence Policy and the Development of a Security Strategy for Europe'. In: Jess Pilegaard (ed.), *The Politics of European Security*. Copenhagen, Danish Institute of International Studies, 2004, pp. 11-38.

<sup>15</sup> Pierre Hougardy, "Permanent Structured Cooperation". In: Sven Biscop and Franco Algieri (eds.), *The Lisbon Treaty and ESDP: Transformation and Integration*. Egmont Paper 24. Brussels, Egmont, 2008, p. 12, [www.egmontinstitute.be/paperegm/ep24.pdf](http://www.egmontinstitute.be/paperegm/ep24.pdf).

same time Member States C, D, E and F can have a shared interest in area Y and cooperate in the form of (i), (ii) or (iii). A number of overlapping clusters would thus emerge, with the EDA responsible for maintaining the overview and evaluating contributions. The fourth strand of the CDP, the database of Member States' plans and programmes, will be of particular importance in this regard.

In many areas, cooperation, including pooling, does not have to start from scratch but can be based on existing initiatives that can be widened and deepened. The least sensitive field is probably that of training, where many countries already cooperate, e.g. France and Belgium for the training of pilots; additional synergies should be easy to find. In the field of logistics and support, many initiatives exist as well, but more can be done. An interesting model is provided by the creation of the European Air Transport Command (EATC) by Belgium, France, Germany and the Netherlands, which will assume effective command over a certain share of the new A400M transport aircraft of the participating countries. This example of pooling could be both deepened, by gradually transferring a larger share of national capability to EATC as well as by integrating further fields such as maintenance etc., and widened, by inviting additional countries to participate. In February 2008 the EDA Steering Board notably decided to set up a project team to investigate how to develop a "European Air Transport Fleet" through pooled ownership of the A400M that several more Member States are acquiring.<sup>16</sup>

Fighter aircraft are the next logical field for cooperation: one can imagine that Member States that are struggling to preserve a capability in this area – an objective which in itself is justifiable – could more easily remain active in this field, and like Belgium e.g. could in the future replace their current aircraft, if they pool their efforts to build one multinational fighter force. Each participating country can contribute (a number of) "national" squadrons, but the unit as a whole is supported by single integrated logistics, maintenance etc. If the actual combat units thus remain national – and there is no need for multinationalization below the squadron or battalion level – synergies can still be found by anchoring these in a multinational structure – wing or brigade – with single multinational support and logistics behind it, creating substantial synergies and effects of scale, as well as integrated command & control arrangements. The World War II RAF can serve to illustrate this model: it counted Belgian, Czech, Dutch, Polish squadrons – but obviously there was no separate Belgian logistic tail or Czech maintenance... This model can apply to the army as well. The objective of achieving full deployability of a Belgian brigade e.g. can be more easily achieved if that brigade is more fully anchored in the Eurocorps, and the Belgian support structures are merged into one Eurocorps structure.

Such formats link back to some of the more constructive Convention proposals, which mentioned "participation in multinational forces with integrated command and control capabilities" as a possible focus for *PermStrucCoop*. An added advantage of contributing to *PermStrucCoop* not simply with pre-identified assets, but by pooling those, is that force packages can be created which include pre-identified arrangements and options for command & control – see e.g. the current debate on the role of the Eurocorps' FHQ – and for strategic transport. In a way, such forms of pooling are a continuation of the battle groups, a major experiment in military integration, but now at a larger scale. The battle groups actually predict the pattern of the clusters that are likely to emerge, for in the battle groups the "usual

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<sup>16</sup> *EU Governments Seek to Improve Air Transport Capacity for Military Operations*. EDA Press Release, 15 February 2008.

suspects”, those that have a tradition of working together, have already found each other – witness the battle group based on the framework nations that also constitute the Eurocorps. As the examples above show, the potentially most advantageous opportunities arise when Member States operate or acquire the same equipment. Perhaps this means that Member States, especially the smaller ones, when deciding on future investments, should take into account the choice of whom they want to cooperate with as a major factor in procurement decisions.

Pooling can actually increase Member States’ sovereignty. Today, many Member States on their own are no longer capable of mounting a sizable operation of some duration – the sovereignty that some cling to is largely illusory. Through pooling however, the efficiency of the national defence budgets can be substantially enhanced, i.e. in term pooling will generate more deployable capabilities within the same budget, and will allow Member States to continue to remain active in a broader range of capability fields, but each at its own level of means. Furthermore, it allows them to operate at levels, e.g. the corps, which are beyond the scope of their national armed forces. As essentially command & control and support & logistics would be merged while the frontline battalions and squadrons would each still be composed of one nationality, there would be sufficient flexibility to allow Member States not to commit frontline capabilities to every operation in which the multinational formation takes part; e.g. an integrated FHQ can still run national operations, as is the case in Admiral Benelux, the far-reaching integration of the Dutch and Belgian navies. Vice versa the possibility of contributing only through the multinational command & control or support structures would make it easier for Member States to support more operations. Operations would be much more efficient, for the logistical tail would be much less fragmented.<sup>17</sup> It is important indeed that the multinational formations created through pooling are also the framework for deployment, unlike the existing multinational units, most of which have rarely if ever been deployed as such.<sup>18</sup>

As pooling gradually progresses, certain national structures in the field of support and command & control will be abolished in order to be merged into multinational structures, thus deepening integration as compared to most existing multinational formations, such as the Eurocorps today, which apart from small permanent elements – in the case of the Eurocorps, the FHQ and its support battalion – are a catalogue of forces without too many links between them, just as much as ESDP as a whole. If joining a multinational formation means nothing more than a new shoulder patch, no synergies and effects of scale and thus no added value will be created. In term, this process may lead to co-location of certain structures, going beyond HQs, on a reduced number of bases, entailing that for the Eurocorps e.g. a share of Belgian, Spanish and Luxembourg personnel hitherto based in their own countries might find themselves serving in bases in France or Germany; similarly a multinational fighter formation would ideally be based on one airbase. However, as many Member States, including Belgium, have had a very large share of their forces serving abroad, notably in Germany, for several decades, that ought not to pose a problem, provided at least that staff are offered interesting conditions.

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<sup>17</sup> Whereas for the current ESDP operation in Chad e.g. in various national contingents the troops dealing with logistics outnumber by far the forces actually on the ground.

<sup>18</sup> Even the Eurocorps e.g. has only seen its FHQ deployed, to Afghanistan and Kosovo, and has never been the framework for the deployment of actual combat units.

## 6. AN EU-NATO-NEUTRAL PROJECT

*PermStrucCoop* is about creating more deployable capabilities in Europe, an objective that benefits both ESDP and NATO, as well as the UN, for even if they are generated through pooling, all of these capabilities can be deployed in all of these frameworks. Vice versa, capabilities generated in the NATO framework should also benefit European deployment in an ESDP or UN context, e.g. the initiative by seventeen NATO members and partners to purchase four Boeing C17 transport aircraft in order to create a Strategic Airlift Capability (SAC). In that sense, *PermStrucCoop* is basically neutral vis-à-vis the eternal EU-NATO debate.

That does not mean however that it will not have any effect on the relationship between the two. Currently, coordination on capability development between the EU and NATO is very limited, because of political blockages at the highest level. It is often said that this lack of coordination is less problematic than it seems, because as they identify the same capability gaps, the EU and NATO obviously come up with very similar guidelines. More realistically perhaps it could be said that it is not problematic simply because Member States largely ignore both NATO and EU guidelines anyway... Until now, the actual impact of either on national defence planning is marginal, and even when – limited – additional capabilities are generated it is difficult to determine to which extent that is a result of EU and/or NATO initiatives – Member States often pledge what was already foreseen in national planning anyway. *PermStrucCoop* has the potential to change that, because of the opportunity to set self-defined but concrete and verifiable objectives and to foster cooperation and pooling, and that within the Treaty, thus allowing the active involvement of EU institutions such as the EDA and, more generally, embedding defence in the overall political project of the EU. If *PermStrucCoop* succeeds in realizing that potential, it will have an important and gradually increasing impact on national decisions. The question then is: where does that leave NATO defence planning? The NATO system is in fact undergoing a review, which will probably result in more focus on priority shortfalls and multinational programmes. As at the same time through *PermStrucCoop* the EU is evolving towards more concrete targets and real assessment of contributions, the two mechanisms appear to be converging.<sup>19</sup> A reconfiguration of defence planning seems in order.

This development need not be seen as a zero-sum game between NATO and the EU. It would rather signal the gradual evolution, already underway, towards a “two-pillar” NATO, composed of two pillars: the US and the EU. These are the two fully-fledged actors, both addressing the whole of foreign policy, from aid and trade to diplomacy and the military, and both building capabilities in all of those areas, which sometimes they will put to use jointly and sometimes not. The decision-making on Lebanon can serve to illustrate the trend. The UN having asked a European contribution to peacekeeping after the 2006 war, the European countries debated this, and decided to act – this decision was taken in the EU, increasingly the political centre of gravity. Following that political decision, in a second step, the framework in which to implement it was chosen – NATO, ESDP or the UN. This cannot be but an ad hoc decision, in function of what is most suited to the case at hand – in the case of Lebanon, to send blue helmets. In view of this trend, and given the problem of the fragmentation of Europe’s defence effort and the potential offered by cooperation and integration among Europeans, it would seem logical that EU Member States would increasingly build an ever

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<sup>19</sup> Heinrich Brauss, “The Future of Defence Planning – A NATO Perspective”. In: Biscop and Algeri, *op.cit.*, pp. 33-41.

more coordinated defence capacity in the ESDP context, which in those cases where the EU and the US decide to act jointly serves as the European military pillar within NATO.

In such a scenario, the US would lose a degree of influence, for it would be natural for an increasingly capable Europe to expect an increased say in decision-making – eventually one could even imagine the EU speaking with one voice in NATO. But the US would gain a much more capable partner with whom real burden-sharing, a long-standing US demand, would be possible – be it that the US should not expect European Allies to deploy their forces in function of just any US policy. Recent declarations by Victoria Nuland, US Permanent Representative to NATO, appear to indicate that US thinking might be shifting in this direction.<sup>20</sup> Pointing to the need for “a Europe that is as united as possible, ready and willing to bear its full measure of responsibility for defending our common security”, Ambassador Nuland called for “a stronger, more capable European defence capacity”, for “an ESDP with only soft power is not enough” – adding that “coalitions of the willing have their limitations”. Less strongly worded, the same spirit can also be found in the declaration issued by NATO’s Bucharest Summit (2-4 April 2008). If this is the course to be followed, the best a US administration could do is simply to tell the more Atlantic-oriented European countries not to worry about the impact on NATO or on their relationship with Washington, not to think in terms of a zero-sum game, but to go ahead and participate fully in enhancing European capabilities through ESDP, for the US to afterwards have a real partner. As these US declarations coincided with the announcement by France of its intention to reintegrate the NATO military structure, a very important symbolic gesture, it seems that the ball now lies in the camp of the UK as the leading Atlanticist country in Europe...

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<sup>20</sup> Victoria Nuland, Speech at the London School of Economics, 25 February 2008. The Ambassador gave a similar speech at the Press Club in Paris on 22 February.

## 7. LOOKING FORWARD: AN EU MILITARY STRATEGY?

Much more important than whether a specific operation will be undertaken under ESDP, NATO or the UN – that will always be an ad hoc decision – is the overall question of the EU's military level of ambition. The 2003 European Security Strategy (ESS) is very ambitious: "Europe should be ready to share in the responsibility for global security". But what does that responsibility entail, in concrete terms? What do the 27 EU Member States as a whole want to be able to do in terms of crisis management and peace support operations, whether they are called Petersberg Tasks or Non-Article 5 Operations? There is a clear lack of vision and a lack of coordination between targets set in the different organizations.

In principle, the *scale* of the ambition for ESDP operations is defined in the 1999 Headline Goal: to project and sustain for a year 60,000 troops. On this number are based the five illustrative scenarios<sup>21</sup> on the basis of which the EUMS does generic planning for the ambition of simultaneously undertaking two to three peacekeeping or peace enforcement operations of significant duration, plus a number of smaller civilian operations. Requiring of course three times as many front-line troops, in view of rotation, plus the various support services, this is an ambitious objective, because it means 60,000 troops for ESDP, *in addition* to NATO, UN and national expeditionary operations, and in addition to collective territorial defence. Although declared operational, with certain limitations, by the Laeken European Council (December 2001), it now often appears as if this objective has been forgotten, being overshadowed by the much more limited battle group project. In any case as, the battle groups set aside, Member States have not committed pre-identified capabilities, the effective availability of the 60,000 is impossible to assess, all the more so as most Member States at the same time have declared the same numbers to NATO, which has of course its own level of ambition, including the 21,000 NRF. If all ongoing ESDP, NATO, UN and national operations in which EU Member States participate are counted, Europe today deploys more than 70,000 troops, but EU Member States can obviously not mobilize 60,000 *additional* troops. It is equally obvious however that even the combined ESDP and NATO level of ambition still falls far short of the total combined armed forces of the EU-27: 2 million troops, on which there is no grand vision, even if collective defence is taken into account. Even less clear than the scale is the geographical and functional focus of the EU's ambition: what, if any, are the priorities for intervention, e.g. the Responsibility to Protect?

This missing link between the overall political objectives of the ESS and capability development means that even if today a task- or output-oriented approach to *PermStrucCoop* is adopted, it is to some extent taking place in a void. What is required is a unified vision on the level of ambition, cutting across organizational divides: whether they act through ESDP, NATO or the UN, how many forces should the EU-27 as a whole be able to muster for crisis management as well as for long-term peacekeeping, for which priorities, which reserves does this require, and which capacity must be maintained for territorial defence? In all probability the result will be that Europe does not need 2 million uniforms...

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<sup>21</sup> Conflict prevention, separation of parties by force, stabilisation, reconstruction and military advice to third countries, evacuation operations and assistance to humanitarian operations.

The new French defence white book,<sup>22</sup> published in June 2008 on the eve of France's EU Presidency, opened this debate, pleading for a European white book on defence and security and re-emphasizing the "60,000" objective; it also indicates the geographical focus of France's efforts, from the Mediterranean to the Indian Ocean. Advantage should be taken of the ongoing debate on the ESS to further the issue. The High Representative, Javier Solana, was tasked by the December 2007 European Council 'to examine the implementation of the Strategy with a view to proposing elements on how to improve the implementation and, as appropriate, elements to complement it', by December 2008. A useful outcome would be a new tasking by the European Council, to draft a white book for the EU, i.e. a military – or perhaps better, civil-military – sub-strategy to the ESS. That would constitute a much more concrete framework within which the CDP can guide Member States' efforts, be they national or multinational. The EU would indeed be the right context to develop such a vision, which afterwards should inform the debate about a new strategic concept for NATO, due to be launched at the Alliance's Strasbourg-Kehl Summit in 2009.

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<sup>22</sup> *Défense et Sécurité Nationale. Le Livre Blanc*. Paris, Odile Jacob / La Documentation Française, 2008, [www.defense.gouv.fr/livre\\_blanc](http://www.defense.gouv.fr/livre_blanc). Chapter 4 (pp. 81-124) deals with "l'ambition européenne".



## 8. CONCLUSION

*PermStrucCoop* can be a very flexible instrument, allowing all EU Member States to participate, if they so choose, at their own level of means, in the way that they choose:

- Member States wanting to take part can declare which contribution, of which size, in which timeframe they are considering: in which specific capability areas, and/or with which force packages, and/or with regard to which longer-term, future capabilities.
- Simultaneously, the participating Member States, with the support of the EDA, can agree on criteria that apply to each specific contribution, regardless of size, in terms of deployability, sustainability, interoperability and per capita investment in equipment, in addition to a minimum level for participation in EDA programmes and, perhaps, operations.
- The EDA can then assess the opportunities for different forms of cooperation and pooling in function of Member States' declared intentions, allowing Member States to decide which contributions they will offer on a national basis and which in cooperation, in which format, with other Member States.
- This will result in a set of concrete capability objectives, to be achieved by pre-identified units, some national, some multinational, in an agreed timeframe.
- The EDA is responsible for monitoring progress and assessing contributions against the agreed criteria and the evolving needs, as well as continuously updating and proposing opportunities for cooperation, in function of the CDP.

*PermStrucCoop* is not the silver bullet that will solve all problems of Europe's military. But because it is in the Treaty and Member States therefore have to consider whether and how to make use of it, it presents a window of opportunity to further ESDP. If a critical mass of Member States willing to go ahead with *PermStrucCoop* can be found, the desire to "be in" will probably lead many others to participate. Once in, peer pressure and the need to avoid exclusion for no longer fulfilling the criteria should stimulate Member States' efforts. The only "carrot" that can stimulate Member States to set demanding criteria in the first place however is the one that should appeal to Finance Ministers: the potential of increasing the efficiency of the defence budget, of realizing a significant and visible output. Whether this constitutes a sufficient incentive remains to be seen.<sup>23</sup>

Because it mostly is a window of opportunity, the same advances can actually also be realized without the specific mechanism of *PermStrucCoop* in the Lisbon Treaty. Member States could launch a similarly permanent and structured process, with a central role for the EDA, through a Capability Commitment Conference.<sup>24</sup> What is required is a critical mass of Member States willing to take things forward. This critical mass must however include the "big three", for maximal gains are only possible if their capabilities are part of the process – closer cooperation between the smaller Member States only has its limits. France and the UK often – rightfully – reproach the others for not doing enough, but they should not block the solution that would exactly allow all Member States to make a useful contribution. Germany is in a different position: in the area of defence, it is one of the "big three" only in terms of numbers, but not in qualitative terms – the deployability of its forces is very limited; it therefore is the country that has perhaps the most to gain from *PermStrucCoop*. The beauty of

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<sup>23</sup> Gerrard Quille, Joanna Popielawska and Jan Michael Deuter, *Workshop Summary. The Impact of the Lisbon Treaty on ESDP. Held on 11 February 2008*. Brussels, European Parliament, 2008.

<sup>24</sup> Jo Coelmont, "Europe's Military Ambition". In: Biscop and Algieri, *op.cit.*, pp. 5-10.

*PermStrucCoop* or an analogous mechanism is its flexibility: allowing for both national and multinational – pooled – contributions, it does not oblige any Member State to go further in integration than it desires. The only vital precondition is that all participating Member States, and notably the “big three”, empower the EDA so that the process has a real chance of success.

*PermStrucCoop* is not an end in itself, but a means towards generating more deployable forces – which itself is only a means towards deploying Europe’s forces in the service of global peace and security. Ultimately therefore, even if the capabilities are available, political willingness, to commit troops where necessary and to act as EU, is the key. But the more integrated Europe’s military capabilities will be, the more EU Member States will be pushed to act as one.